

SCTP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a departure from their past practice of building more roads to relieve traffic congestion, local governments are looking to public transit as a solution to traffic impediments. An expansion of the public transit system is identified in the goals and objectives of transportation plans developed by regional and local agencies.

The mission of the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) is to provide basic mobility for the transit dependent, those without access to, or unable to use a car for transportation around the South Coast. Expanding the role of MTD to attract new riders away from the comfort and convenience of their cars will expand the mission. However, it cannot be accomplished without the support of the community.

This South Coast Transit Plan (SCTP) identifies what resources are necessary for MTD and the community to meet this new mission. The plan proposes restructuring the current MTD service to make it more convenient and add new service and enhancements to attract the non-traditional transit user. The cost and funding of new buses, bus operations, and enhancements are addressed in the plan.

It is a comprehensive plan comprised of three parts. The first part describes the MTD, how it is organized and funded and what it has accomplished, followed by the MTD mission for the 21st Century. The section concludes with a summary of the transit goals and objectives from documents prepared by regional and local government agencies. The agencies' expectations for MTD provided services are of particular importance.

Part Two is the focal point of the SCTP. It outlines a transit plan for each of the local communities served by MTD. The proposed service offers convenient, small, quiet electric buses linking residents to shopping and jobs. New, frequent express service connects shoppers and commuters to the far reaches of the South Coast offering travel time competitive with the automobile.

For the City of Santa Barbara, the plan provides crosstown shuttles linking the Eastside and Westside, a new direct route from the Westside to La Cumbre Plaza, and a new Mesa loop featuring ten minute bus trips to the heart of downtown. Restructured Cottage Hospital service and expansion of the Downtown-Waterfront Shuttle service complements the neighborhood service, effectively forming a grid of the downtown. A new transit corridor running parallel to the entire downtown area (southbound on Anacapa, and northbound on Chapala Street) places shoppers and commuters from Goleta and Carpinteria at the doorstep of jobs and shopping. Expanded express lines connecting Santa Barbara directly to downtown Goleta, the Camino Real Marketplace, Fairview Center, and Carpinteria offer fast and direct service not currently available.

With the likely relocation of the adjoining Greyhound Bus station, the Carrillo Hotel redevelopment, and the completion of Saks Fifth Avenue, the MTD Transit Center is amidst many changes. Furthermore, the City of Santa Barbara is considering significant expansion of the public parking facility (Lot 3) adjacent to the Transit Center. While the Transit Center has served a vital function for over 25 years, its role clearly can be changed in order to support and enhance these potential improvements. To meet the parking need and serve as a centerpiece for downtown service, the MTD proposes the construction of a new dual purpose parking/transit structure (referred to as the “Downtown Pavilion” in the SCTP). The Downtown Pavilion is a vital part of improving circulation throughout the new transit corridor as it preserves a transit presence in the heart of downtown, promotes alternative transportation, and provides new amenities for the area. (An artist’s rendering of the Downtown Pavilion is shown in an appendix of the SCTP).

Augmenting the Downtown Pavilion are strategically located enhanced bus shelters. These will be placed along the transit corridor and in Santa Barbara neighborhoods. The proposed shelters will be attractively designed and well lit, offer comfortable seating, detailed route and schedule information as well as an MTD information phone line. An example of such a shelter is illustrated in the sketch enclosed with the Downtown Pavilion drawing. These shelters will draw attention to transit availability, ease of use, and the desirability of traveling on a city bus.

In Goleta, the SCTP provides restructuring of current trunk and express routes with more frequent and wider spans of service. This is to accommodate transit needs created by the Camino Real Marketplace. New shuttle service connecting Isla Vista and Fairview to the Marketplace, Old Town to the Airport and UCSB, a feeder linking Winchester Canyon and Ellwood to the Marketplace and the Hollister Industrial Center will focus on shopper, commuter, and youth activity circulation needs at the Camino Real Marketplace and surrounding recreational facilities. Patterson/Turnpike neighborhood shuttles will serve both close-in shoppers and commuters and connections to expanded trunk and express service. New Goleta express service will open transit opportunities between Goleta and Carpinteria, the Santa Barbara Westside, and, between Fairview and Downtown Santa Barbara.

For Carpinteria, neighborhood shuttle service is proposed as a primary travel mode for shopping, the beach, and connections to expanded trunk and express service. A noontime shuttle will furnish the Mark Avenue Industrial Complex workers with convenient service providing lunch time access to Downtown Carpinteria. A restructured Carpinteria/Santa Barbara Express and a new express route to Downtown Goleta and the Camino Real Marketplace provide a transit incentive which does not currently exist.

Montecito service will be improved by restructuring the current Line 14 to shorten trip time and the addition of shuttle service connecting the San Ysidro/Sheffield loop to Coast Village Road and trunk line service.

A transit solution requires an investment by the community. This will be a sound investment considering the MTD past performance in providing a cost effective product for taxpayers. MTD, for the eighth year in a row, was ranked the most cost effective transit operator in California and in the top ten nationwide. MTD has the lowest subsidy rate of any transit district in the state. Fares cover nearly half of its annual operating cost, far and above the 22% statewide average. The investment in the SCTP is expected to yield a reduction of 3.7 million automobile trips annually on South Coast roads.

Implementation of the SCTP requires new buses: 41 electric and 10 clean-burning diesels, at a cost of \$13.3 million. The annual cost to operate the service, over and above current service, is \$9 million. Additionally, \$13.4 million is required for the Downtown Pavilion, shelters, and other transit enhancements. These costs are in terms of 1998 dollars.

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) is the conduit for local and regional transportation funding. SBCAG plans, selects, and approves all projects funded from various federal, state, and local sources. There are sufficient funds to underwrite the SCTP, if the community chooses to redirect funds traditionally used for other purposes.

With respect to funding mechanisms, local sources from the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and Parking and Business Improvement Area (PBIA) funds, and Federal funds authorized by Congress under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) are eligible for capital equipment procurements. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds authorized by ISTEA are eligible to underwrite nearly 90% of transit operating costs for up to three years for projects meeting emission reduction requirements. The three year period acts as a demonstration phase allowing the effectiveness of the service to be evaluated and adjusted as required. Virtually all of the SCTP projects qualify for CMAQ funds.

MTD and local authorities can work together in developing funding strategies. ISTEA and local funds are sources for bus procurement and transit enhancements. Fare revenues and CMAQ funds together are sources to fund operating costs for the first three years. When combined with MTD fare revenues, Measure D is a source for funding subsequent years of operation. Accordingly, the following is suggested as a funding strategy:

<u>(Dollars in Millions)</u>		
	<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Capital:		
Bus Procurement	ISTEA	\$13.3
Enhancements	ISTEA/Local	<u>13.4</u>
		\$26.7
Annual Operating:		

1st 3 Years	Fares	\$1.8
	CMAQ/Local Share	<u>7.2</u>
		\$9.0

Subsequent Years	Fares	\$4.1
	Measure D/Local	<u>4.9</u>
		\$ 9.0

The SCTP suggests priorities for a phased implementation of service. The phasing considers immediate transit or traffic mitigation needs, the potential for attracting new transit riders, and timing of the service to future development in the region.

Finally, part Three of the SCTP defines in detail the improvements required of current MTD service and additional new service. The detailed assessments in this section are the basis for the recommended service in part Two.

It is important to bear in mind that the SCTP is not a mandated government document. Instead, it serves as a blueprint for the future of transit on Santa Barbara County's South Coast. It is a "living" plan, not inflexible but responsive to the community's desires. This plan can further the dialogue that will lead to positive action to bring about an effective transit solution.

